

tauk Point, says, "Do not see them every winter. They appear to be a very dumb bird. I picked this one up on the beach alive, and was going to send it to you that way, but it died before I could do so. The Captain of our Station says 'to the best of his knowledge he has never seen one before.' He has been in the Life-Saving Service twelve years." At South Oyster Bay and Rockaway, which are but a few miles from the western end of the Island, the gunners and Life-Saving men had never seen them before, and at the former place the single one shot was considered so rare that it was preserved and mounted.

FIELD NOTES FROM PICTOU COUNTY, NOVA SCOTIA.

BY JAMES MCKINLAY.

SHORTLY after the commencement of the present century the Pictou Academy was founded, and its first superintendent was Dr. Thomas McCulloch, a gentleman of high literary attainments, who numbered among his friends the illustrious Audubon. With a view to promote the various branches of scientific research he early directed his attention to the establishment of a museum in connection with the Academy, intending among other objects to gather there a complete representation of the zoölogy of the Province of Nova Scotia, especially that of the eastern portion, at that time called the District of Pictou. So energetically was the scheme prosecuted that little more than a quarter of a century had elapsed ere the enterprise had attained a high degree of excellence, and the collection was pronounced by Audubon, who visited it, to be surpassed by none other, at that time, in America. Unhappily, however, that valuable collection was suffered to pass entirely out of our Province, which is the more to be regretted as many of the species represented have since become extinct or extremely rare to our fauna.

This applies to the mammals as well as to the birds, but the change is most marked numerically in certain aquatic species of the feathered race, for instead of the vast multitudes which in former days were wont to visit our bays and harbors in early spring and in autumn, now we meet but a few small and scat-

tered flocks. Their remarkable declension may be mainly attributable to over-much annoyance and disturbance by the increased traffic of vessels, and perhaps more especially by the unrestrained and incessant use of firearms by an increasing class of gunners, whose aim is to destroy fowl of every description irrespective of the season, merely to gratify an ungovernable propensity for destruction, and without heed of the consideration that such practices must result in the annihilation of entire tribes.

Among the ranks of the graminivorous and insectivorous species of birds the numbers that annually visit this locality appear much the same as they were half a century ago. These are rarely found within the deeper forests, but spread over the more open country bordering on the settlements, some species taking up their abode in our gardens and byways.

The numbers of the Ruffed Grouse have been seriously diminished, but I notice that in those districts where they are most harrassed they have become exceedingly wary and cunning. I have also observed that among these birds the size of the brood has decreased, for instead of clutches of nine, ten, or a dozen, I now rarely find one-half that number.

The Eskimos assert that during the period of incubation the Ptarmigan cease to give off any scent by which they can be traced; and my experience leads me to think that our Ruffed Grouse possess the same peculiarity, else how could they so universally escape alike from furred and feathered foes, as they certainly do at this season.

The several species of the 'noble order' of birds are not so numerously represented here as formerly, influenced, I think, to a very great extent, by the destruction of our forests by fire and other causes.

Perhaps no bird is more regretfully recalled by our older sportsmen than is the Wild Pigeon. The first inhabitants of this Province found this elegant and savory member of the Columbidae abundant everywhere.

Their spring arrival usually occurred early in the month of May, and the bulk seldom made their autumnal exit until the middle of October. They constructed their simple nests in the branches of lofty trees, especially hemlocks, beneath whose foliage they found a grateful shade from the midday sun, and from which they seldom issued except at early dawn or at evening. In olden

times their food was very abundant, and consisted chiefly of strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries, which now-a-days are, unaccountably, found only in very meagre quantities, quite too limited to supply the vast flocks of Pigeons which formerly resorted here. This failure in their provisions appears to me the best reason to give for their withdrawal from this section, and is the same reason given by Audubon for their leaving some more southern localities.

I can not so readily account for the marked decrease in the numbers of Plovers visiting us. These swift and graceful fliers usually made their first appearance about the end of August, or much earlier in seasons that were wet and stormy, with prevailing northerly gales. The major part, however, usually delayed until the first week in September.

Contemporary with these heavier flocks, composed entirely of the Black-bellied species, came the Eskimo Curlews, which sometimes intermingled with their smaller congeners. The Golden Plover was usually the last of the Charadriidæ to depart, staying until the latter end of October. This species was never so numerous here as was the Black-bellied, but both are rarely met with here now. The Long-billed Curlew has forsaken our shore entirely, save a few stray birds which drop in upon us about the first of September, or a small flock is started in some remote and sequestered beach. They rarely venture upon the uplands, as I can remember them doing years ago. None of the family ever visit us in the spring now-a-days; it is only in their autumnal migrations that they favor us with a visit, and even now flocks are seen passing over the country high in the air and steering due south. I can remember when Wilson's Snipe came here in immense flocks, but about a quarter of a century ago they began to lessen in numbers, and now they are far from common. Woodcock on the other hand, are more plentiful now than they were fifty years ago. When Pictou County was first settled none were found here, and in 1830 the first specimen was placed in the museum of the Academy. From this date they increased rapidly until about fifteen years ago, when their numbers appeared to decrease, from what cause I can only conjecture. Almost every season a few of this species are met with here in March, when the earth's surface is frozen and covered deep with snow, excepting in a few favored spots. These spots are, however, spied out by these

hungry birds, and they may be seen here diligently probing for a dinner.

Pictou, owing to its geographical position, lies within the line of bird migration, and is annually visited by many of the aquatic species.

The earliest to arrive here during the vernal migration is the Canada Goose, and even if the weather has been stormy the advance guard usually put in an appearance during the first week in March, followed by a large flock some ten days later. Should southerly winds prevail, other large flocks appear, moving at a much greater altitude than did the first comers. About the 8th or 10th of April the bulk have reached here. From this point northward their movements seem to be much influenced by the weather, and often after leaving here and encountering ice and head winds they have returned. About the 20th of April the main portion are usually away, though a few stragglers are met as late as the middle of May. Those which tarry longest with us often pair before proceeding northward.

In the autumn, should the temperature suddenly lower and cold north winds prevail, the first comers—small parties, mainly young birds—are seen as early as the first week in September, and their appearance is considered a sign of an early winter, though this does not always prove correct. The largest flights pass us from the first to the middle of October. A large number generally withdraw to some favorite feeding ground in a well screened cove, and feasting on nutritious sub-marine plants, reach the extraordinary weight of eighteen pounds. Many of these stay until the waters are on the point of freezing, and occasionally some which have tarried for the last possible mouthful have been seen as late as Christmas, hurrying southward at a great height.

The Brants arrive here in the spring, later than the Geese, and remain a month longer. On their first arrival they are in very poor condition and do not appear to recruit much before the middle of May, after which their obesity increases perceptibly, and by the first of June they attain their highest state of edible perfection.

For a few days previous to their starting northward they visit the seashore and sand-beaches where they can obtain small quartz pebbles, locally termed 'ballast,' and then, congregating at one central rendezvous, they await for a southerly breeze, when,

the entire body rising together, after a few circuits in the air, they fly directly north. Their customary time to leave us in the spring is exceedingly precise, rarely varying more than from the 9th to the 12th of June.

The Eider Ducks, called by our gunners 'Sea Ducks,' visit us in the autumn in immense throngs. Flying close to the water in horizontal lines, they pass along our shore early in November, and continue on through the Straits of Canso and along the eastern shore of Nova Scotia to the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. Occasionally, however, a flock with more sagacity has been seen to mount into the air and fly across the land to the head waters of the Bay. None of this species have been observed on our coast during the spring months, when their line of flight is said to be along the north-eastern shore of Cape Breton and to the Straits of Belle Isle. In all the throngs of this species that pass us no adult males are ever seen.

Occasionally birds have been met with in this vicinity that have evidently been driven off their usual haunts. For instance, some twenty years ago considerable numbers of Scarlet Tanagers were found here about the 10th of May. Some were dead, and all were in an emaciated condition. None have been seen here since.

About the same year the Glossy Ibises were seen on the margin of a small lake near here, and one was captured by a countryman.

ANALECTA ORNITHOLOGICA.

Fourth Series.

BY LEONHARD STEJNEGER.

XVII. ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD *Quiscalus*.

THE words *Quiscalus* of Vieillot and *quiscula* of Linnæus* seem to have perplexed 'ornithophilologists' considerably, and

* Both combined in the terms *Quiscalus quiscula* (Lin.), *Quiscalus quiscula aglæus* (Baird), and *Quiscalus quiscula æneus* (Ridgw.) for the Purple Grackles (Ridgw., Nomencl., Nos. 278, 278 a, and 278 b).